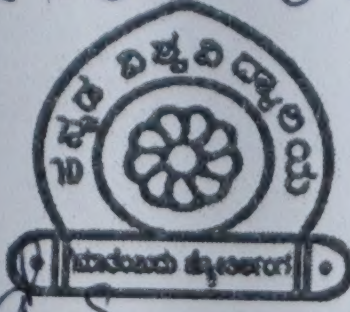


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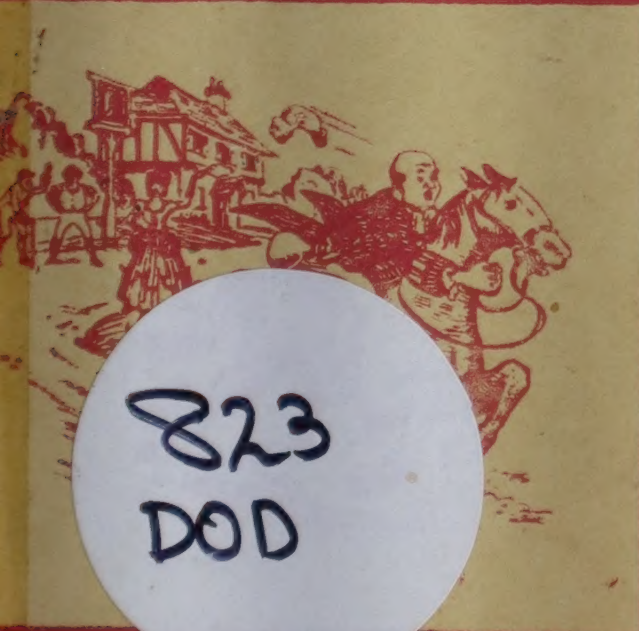
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STORIES FROM FAMOUS POEMS

TOLD BY
E. F. DODD, B.A.

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PREFACE

This book is intended for use by pupils studying English as a foreign language. It is based on a planned and limited vocabulary, and is suitable as a Supplementary Reader for Secondary Schools. In addition to careful vocabulary selection, the greatest care has been taken to avoid any difficult sentence structures.

AKSHARA GRANTHALAYA



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THE CLERK OF OXFORD'S TALE

FROM

THE CANTERBURY TALES

By Geoffrey Chaucer

[Geoffrey Chaucer is sometimes called the Father of English Poetry, because he was the first great English writer to write in the English language. But the spelling and many of the words were very different then from the English which is spoken today, and Chaucer's own words are difficult to understand.]

In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer tells of twenty-nine people who were travelling together to the town of Canterbury. There was a clerk (that is, a student) of Oxford, a doctor, several merchants and priests, and many others. They were all riding together on the road to Canterbury, and, to pass the time during the journey, each member of the party agreed to tell a story. Here is the Clerk's Tale—the story of Patient Griselda.]

IN Italy there once lived a rich man called Walter, who ruled over the district of Saluzzo. Everyone loved and obeyed him, but he was not married, and (his people wanted him to take a wife. They begged him to marry as soon as possible, so that he would leave a son to rule over them when he was dead.)

“No man knows when death will come,” they said, “and it would be a sad thing for us if you

should die without a son. We do not want to be ruled by a strange lord. We will choose you a noble wife, if you will allow us."

Walter was proud that his people loved him, and he said: "My dear people, I do not want a wife, but I will marry if you want me to do so. But I will choose my own wife, and, when I am married, you must be good and obedient to the lady, whoever she may be."

They all agreed, and asked him to name his marriage day. And Walter gave orders to his servants to make plans for the marriage feast, but nobody knew whom he was going to choose for his wife.

(In a village near Walter's home, there lived a poor man called Janicola. He had a beautiful daughter, Griselda, who was as good as she was beautiful. Sitting at her spinning-wheel, or looking after the sheep in the fields, she worked all day to help her poor old father.) At night she cooked a simple meal for their supper.

Walter had often seen Griselda when he went out hunting, and he had decided that, if he ever married, she should be his wife. On the day fixed for the marriage, the people still did not know whom Walter was going to marry. The feast was cooked, the guests had come, and everything was ready; but no one, except Walter, knew who his wife would be.

Then Walter called for his horse and rode out

to the village, followed by all his guests. Griselda had gone to get water from the well. She knew it was Walter's marriage-day, and she wanted to finish her work quickly, so that she could watch the marriage. When she returned to her father's hut with the water, she was very surprised to see Walter standing there.

"Where is your father, Griselda?" he asked.

"My lord, he is in the garden," answered Griselda, and she hurried off to call her father.

The old man came back to the hut, and Walter met him at the door.

"Janicola," he said, "I beg that I may take your daughter for my wife. Will you agree?"

The old man was almost too surprised to speak. Could it be true that this rich lord wanted to marry his daughter? At last he told Walter that he would be ruled by him in all things, and Walter turned to Griselda.

"Griselda," he said, "will you agree to be my wife? Are you ready to love and obey me in all things?"

Griselda answered: "My lord, I am only a poor girl, but if you want to marry me I will be a true and obedient wife to you. I will never disobey you, even if I die for it."

Walter led her to the door of the hut and showed her to his guests.

"This is my wife," he told them. "You must

show your love for me by treating her with love and honour."

Then he told the ladies to dress Griselda in the beautiful clothes which he had brought for her. He put a ring on her finger and set her on a snow-white horse, and they rode together to his house. The rest of the day was spent in feasting.

Griselda was so kind and good that the people grew to love her, and they soon forgot that she was a poor man's daughter. She obeyed her husband in all things, and Walter could find no fault with her. They were very happy together during the first year of their marriage, and Griselda was filled with joy when their baby daughter was born.

But her joy did not last long. Walter, wanting to test her love and duty towards him, had a wicked idea. He pretended that the people were angry because he had not married a lady of noble birth; and he told her that they were more angry than ever now that she had given birth to a daughter instead of a son.

"I want to keep my people happy," he said, "and I must listen to what they say. I do not want to do anything against your will, so I hope you will be as patient and obedient as you have always been."

Griselda said sadly: "My lord, you must do as you think best. I will always obey you."

Walter felt proud and happy at her reply, but



He hid his joy and left the room, making up his mind to try her even more. He called one of his servants and told him to go into Griselda's room and say: "My lady, you must excuse me. I am only doing what I am ordered. I have been told to take your child away."

Poor Griselda! She was afraid he would kill the baby she loved so much, but she did not cry. Remembering her promise to her husband, she kissed her little daughter and held her out to the

man, who seized the child in his arms and went away.

Walter sent the baby girl to his sister in Bologna who looked after her with love and care for many years. But poor patient Griselda thought her baby was dead, and Walter watched his wife for any signs of sorrow or anger against him. But she was always kind and good. She never spoke about the baby, and treated her husband as dutifully as she had always done.

Four years later, Griselda had a son. There was great joy among the people at the birth of this little baby boy, and his father was very happy, too. But when the baby was two years old, Walter again made up his mind to test his patient wife.

He went to Griselda's room and said to her: "I told you how angry the people were about our marriage. Now they say it would be wrong for Janicola's grandson to rule after I am dead. I must listen to what they say, and I feel I must do to my little son what I did to his sister."

Once more patient Griselda obeyed her husband's orders without showing any anger or sorrow. The baby boy was taken away and sent to Bologna, to be brought up with his sister.

Walter wondered greatly at his wife. He knew how much she loved her children, and he watched her; but he could never find any change in her. She was as good and obedient as she had always been.

Four more years passed, and then Walter decided to test his wife's patience for the last time. When their little daughter was twelve years old, he pretended he wanted to send Griselda away, so that he could marry a rich and noble lady. Griselda was terribly sad. She loved Walter more than anyone in the world, but she was ready to leave him if he did not need her any more.

Walter sent a message to his sister's husband in Bologna, asking him to bring the two children back to Saluzzo but to tell nobody who they were. He must pretend that the girl was coming to marry Walter. Then Walter told Griselda she must leave him.

"I married you because you were good and obedient," he said. "But you were not rich or nobly-born, and now my people beg me, day by day, to take another wife. My new wife is already on her way here, and you must give up your place and make room for her. Take your old clothes and go back to your father."

Griselda took off all her fine clothes and put on the old dress she had worn before her marriage. She left her husband's house and returned to her old father.

Soon afterwards, Walter's children came to Saluzzo, and Walter sent for Griselda. He told her she must serve his new wife, and Griselda answered: "I shall be pleased to obey you, my lord."

When the guests came to the supper-table, Walter called Griselda to him and said, as if in fun: "What do you think of my wife, Griselda?"

"I have never seen a more beautiful girl, my lord," she answered. "And I hope you will be very happy together. But I beg you to be kind to her."

She showed no signs of jealousy or anger, and Walter at last felt sure of her real goodness. He cried: "It is enough, Griselda mine! No man has ever had such a true and loving wife as sweet, patient Griselda."

She was filled with wonder, and he explained what he had done.

"It was a wicked thing to do," he said. "But you are my wife and I have never wanted to take another. This sweet young girl is our daughter, and the little boy with her is our son. They have lived in Bologna all these years. Now take them. They are indeed your own dear ones, brought safely home to you again."

Griselda fainted with joy when she heard these words. When she came to herself again, she thanked God for returning her two long-lost children to her. She kissed them, and tears of joy fell from her eyes.

"I thank you, my lord," she said. "You have brought back my dear children to me. Now I am afraid of nothing, not even death itself, because I know I have truly won your love."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did his people want Walter to marry?
2. Why was old Janicola so surprised that Walter wanted to marry his daughter?
3. Why was Griselda called *patient* Griselda?
4. Who looked after Walter's children in Bologna?
5. What did Griselda do when Walter told her he was going to marry someone else?

THE FAIRY QUEEN

By Edmund Spenser

[Edmund Spenser was, like Chaucer, one of the earliest English writers, but he was born a hundred and fifty years after Chaucer died, and lived when Elizabeth I was Queen of England. He wrote a very long poem in honour of Queen Elizabeth, which he called *The Faerie Queene*. The people in the poem had many wonderful adventures. Here is the story of one of those adventures.]

UNA AND THE DRAGON

LONG ago, there was a Queen of Fairyland called Gloriana. The people of Gloriana's Fairyland were not the small fairies whom one reads about in fairy stories; they were brave knights—young men who wanted to do fine and wonderful acts—and they came to Gloriana for advice and help. She could give them magic powers with which to fight their enemies and help people in trouble.

At this time there was a great kingdom ruled over by a king and queen who were in terrible trouble. A wicked dragon had come to live in their land. A dragon was a great animal which breathed out fire from its mouth. It could fly in the air and run on the ground, and it was a very evil and dangerous creature. This dragon had

killed many people in the land and eaten up all the food, and the poor king and queen had shut themselves up in a strong castle from which they were afraid to come out.

The king had one child, a daughter, called Una. Una was gentle and beautiful and brave and good. She had heard of the Fairy Queen, Gloriana, and about the brave knights of her court, and she decided to visit Fairyland. "I will ask Queen Gloriana to send one of her knights to kill the dragon for us," Una thought.

She put on a long black dress and hid her face behind a veil, and then she set off on her journey, riding a snow-white donkey. She took a servant with her; a very small man, who led a beautiful horse for the knight to ride. The horse carried a suit of armour. In those days knights fought with bows and arrows and swords, and they wore a coat of metal to protect themselves. This coat was called armour. The armour which Una took with her had once been used by a holy knight, and it had a red cross on the front of the suit.

After a long journey, Una at last came to Gloriana's court in Fairyland. She told the Fairy Queen about the terrible dragon, and asked her to let one of her knights come and fight the creature. A tall young man came forward and asked if he could go with Una. He had only recently joined Gloriana's court and he did not look like a

knight at all. He was a strange-looking man, rough and ugly in appearance, and Una felt very doubtful about him. But he begged her to let him try on the armour, promising that he would give up his claim if the suit did not fit him well. So Una agreed, and he tried on the armour.

As soon as he put it on, he changed completely: he was no longer rough and ugly. He became the finest and best-looking man in the Court, and Queen Gloriana named him the Red Cross Knight, because of the red cross on his armour. The little servant brought forward the horse for the knight, and they all three set off in search of the wicked dragon.

They had many adventures on the way, but at last they reached the land where Una's father was king. They saw the towers of his castle, and Una warned the Red Cross Knight that the dragon must be somewhere near. As she was speaking, they heard a terrible noise, and they saw the dragon lying stretched out on the sunny side of a hill. As soon as it saw Una and the Red Cross Knight, it hurried towards them. The knight told Una to go to a hill in the distance, where she could watch the fight in safety.

The terrible creature came on, half-walking and half-flying in its haste. Its body was covered with a hard skin, like armour, and its wings were like the sails of a big ship. Its long tail stretched for

nearly half a mile behind it, and at the end of the tail there were two sharp stings. It also had terrible sharp nails on its feet, and in its mouth there were three rows of iron teeth. It breathed out fire and smoke and made a fearful noise as it came towards the Red Cross Knight.

The knight drew his sword and attacked the beast. He could not cut through the hard skin, but his sword made the dragon stop and turn aside, and it knocked down the knight and his horse with its tail. The brave man was badly hurt, but he got up again and attacked the evil creature once more. The dragon had fought and killed many knights, but it had never before met such a strong and fearless enemy. It grew very angry and picked up both the knight and his horse and flew into the air, but they struggled so hard that it had to drop them again. The knight struck once more with his sword, and this time he cut the dragon close under its wing. The black blood poured from the wound, and the evil creature was wild with pain. It sent out more burning fire from its mouth, and hit the knight such a terrible blow with its tail that he fell to the ground, unconscious.

And now the sun set and night came on. Poor Una, watching from the distant hill, saw the Red Cross Knight lying in some water on the ground. The dragon flew away, and Una was sure that her

brave knight was dead. She did not sleep, but spent the long dark night in prayer.

Una did not know, however, that there was a wonderful stream nearby. It was called the Well of Life, and its waters could cure illness and even bring the dead to life again. The Knight had fallen into this well and, when morning came, Una saw him get up. Her joy was very great to see his life and strength renewed by the wonderful well.

The dragon was amazed, and did not know whether this was the same enemy as yesterday, or whether another man had come to fight it. The knight lifted his sword and gave the dragon a great blow, wounding its head. Wild with anger, the dragon lifted its tail and drove a sting right through the knight's shoulder. The pain was terrible, but the brave man struck again and again with his sword until he at last succeeded in cutting off part of the dragon's tail. They fought all through the day, and by evening the poor knight was nearly dead. He fell down again, unconscious. The dragon went away, and poor Una once more thought her knight had been killed.

But his life was saved a second time, because he fell beside a wonderful tree. This tree gave off a magic dew which fell on the ground around it. Some of this dew fell on the unconscious knight and gave him new life and health, and the next day he rose up ready to fight again.



The dragon had been waiting for the daylight in order to kill its enemy, but the knight was ready for the attack. He drove his sword right into the beast's mouth and down its throat. The dragon fell dead and the earth shook with the great weight of its body.

Una was almost afraid to come down from the hill, but, seeing that the dragon did not move, she came at last and saw that the great ugly beast was really dead. She praised God and thanked her brave companion.

There was great rejoicing in the land. Everyone

came out from the castle to look at the dead dragon and to praise the Red Cross Knight. From that time he was no longer known as the Red Cross Knight: he was called St. George, the Killer of the Dragon. Una's father asked St. George to stay in their court for ever, but the knight said he must return to Fairyland. He had promised Gloriana that he would serve her for six years. Before he left, he and Una were married with great feasting and rejoicing.

At last he left for Gloriana's Court, promising his beloved Una that he would return to her as soon as he could; and Una stayed quietly at home with her parents in their peaceful land.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Una go to Fairyland?
2. Why did Una feel doubtful about the Red Cross Knight before he put on the armour?
3. Describe what the dragon looked like.
4. What saved the Red Cross Knight's life (a) on the first night, and (b) on the second?
5. By what name was the Red Cross Knight known after he had killed the dragon?

THE STORY OF JOHN GILPIN

By William Cowper

[William Cowper (1731–1800) was an English poet who was known for his pure idiomatic English. His most famous poem is the *Task* but he is equally well known as a letter-writer.]

LONG ago there was a man called John Gilpin who lived in the city of London. One day his wife said to him: “We have been married for twenty years and we have never been away for a holiday. Tomorrow is our wedding anniversary.* Let us go to the village of Edmonton. We can have a meal there and come back to London in the evening.”

In those days there were no cars, so his wife said they must go in a horse-drawn carriage.

“But I should like my sister and her child to come with us,” said Mrs. Gilpin. “There will only be room in the carriage for them and me and our three children, so you will have to come on horseback.”

John Gilpin thought this was a very good idea.

“I have a friend who lives in Ware,” he said. “I know he will let me have his horse for the day.”

“We will take some wine with us,” said Mrs. Gilpin. “It will be cheaper than getting it at Edmonton.”

* The date of one's wedding that is celebrated yearly.

The next morning the carriage came, and the women and children got in and set off for Edmon-ton. John Gilpin jumped on his friend's horse, but before he could follow his family the servant came running out of the house.

"The wine is left behind!" she said.

"Bring it to me," said John Gilpin. "And bring my strong leather belt."

He put on his belt and fixed the bottles to it, one at each side. Then he jumped on his horse again and set off.

At first the horse went slowly because the road was full of stones, but soon the way was smoother and the horse moved faster. Now John Gilpin was not a very good horseman, and he told the horse to go more slowly but it would not listen to him. It began to run very fast, and John Gilpin caught hold of its neck to stop himself from falling off. He did not realize that the horse was going fast because it wanted to get back to its home in Ware.

Poor John Gilpin! He hung on to the horse's neck and the wind blew off his hat, but he could not stop the horse to pick the hat up again. In those days, men used to wear a false cap of hair called a wig; and the next thing that happened was that his wig was blown off, too. He must have looked very funny without hat or wig, riding so fast down the road, with the bottles of wine jumping up and down from his belt.



All the people on the road thought he was having a race, and they cried out "Well done!" as he went past. He came to a gate, but the guard quickly opened it for him and the horse did not stop. The bottles of wine knocked against each other and broke into pieces, and all the wine ran over John Gilpin and his horse.

At last they came to Edmonton. John's family saw him going past and called out: "Stop, stop, John Gilpin! Here's the house! The meal is ready, and we are tired!"

"I'm tired, too!" said John Gilpin unhappily, but the poor man could not stop the horse. It

had decided that it was going back to Ware, and Ware was still ten miles away. So on they went, and the horse did not stop until it came to its master's house. Its master was very surprised to see John Gilpin riding so fast, and without his hat and wig. John explained that he had come because the horse had come, and he could not make it stop at Edmonton. His friend gave him another hat and wig, and John Gilpin climbed on to his horse again.

"You came here to please yourself," he said to the horse. "Now you shall go back to Edmonton to please me."

As he was speaking, a donkey gave a loud cry just behind him and the horse, filled with fear, began to run, faster than ever, back to Edmonton.

Away went Gilpin, and away
Went Gilpin's hat and wig.
He lost them sooner than at first.
And why?—they were too big."

Mrs. Gilpin had been watching the road for her husband's return, and when she saw him coming she called the driver of the carriage. She showed him some money and said: "This shall be yours when you bring back my husband safe and well."

The man took one of his horses and rode towards John Gilpin. He tried to catch hold of Gilpin's horse, but he made the poor animal more afraid than ever and it would not stop. Away they went,

John Gilpin first, and the driver riding after him. This time, the people in the road did not call "Well done!" They cried "Stop, thief! Stop, thief!" and six gentlemen on horseback raced after John Gilpin and the driver.

At last John Gilpin came to his house in London, feeling as tired and thirsty as his horse. The guards opened the gates for him again, thinking he was still running a race. It was too late to return to Edmonton, so he went sadly into his house and waited for his family to return.

QUESTIONS

1. Who travelled in the carriage to Edmonton?
2. Why did John Gilpin go on horseback?
3. Was it his own horse?
4. Why did the horse go back to Ware?
5. Did John Gilpin ever get his meal at Edmonton?

THE ANCIENT MARINER

By S. T. Coleridge

[Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) produced poetry of such excellence as to place him in the first rank of English poets. Among his other famous poems are ‘*Kubla Khan*’ and ‘*Christabel*’.

This is a very strange poem, telling of an old sailor who was cursed by the ship’s crew because he killed a great sea-bird, the albatross, which was believed to bring them good luck on their journeys. The old sailor himself is telling the story to a man who was on his way to a marriage feast.]

THE marriage ceremony was over and the guests were all going to the feast. The old grey-bearded sailor sat on a stone outside the Church and watched the people walking past him. He had a strange, mad look in his eyes, and suddenly he stopped one of the guests.

“There was a ship.....” the old sailor began, and he spoke so strangely that the guest stood still and listened to him. The feast began; the guest could hear the music and the laughter, but for some reason he could not move to join the others. He had to stay and listen to the bright-eyed sailor’s story.

The old man told him about his last journey on

mariner : sailor.

the sea. They had sailed away to the south, he said, until they arrived in cold grey seas. Even the sea was frozen, and the ice was all around them. In those days there were no steamships, and the big white sails of their ship opened wide as the strong wind blew them quickly through the icy waters. The weather was very cold and there were no birds or animals in that snow-covered country, but one day the sailors saw an albatross flying towards the ship. The albatross is a big sea-bird, and it brings good luck to sailors, so the men were pleased to see it. They gave it food and water and it became very tame. It came to the ship every day when the sailors called it.

“But one day I shot the albatross!” the old sailor told the marriage guest. “It was a terrible thing to do, and everyone said I had killed the bird which made the winds blow. I had brought bad luck to the crew.”

And they were right. The ship sailed out of the icy waters into another sea, where the sun shone hotly overhead. The wind dropped. Day after day they stayed in that silent sea. There was no wind to fill the sails, and the ship rested unmoving, “as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean.” The heat was terrible. There was not a breath of wind, nor a cloud in the sky to guard them from the burning sun. Their supply of drinking water was finished, and they could not drink

the salty sea water. There was water everywhere around them, but they had not a drop to drink.

The other sailors were very angry with the old man who had shot the albatross. They blamed him for their sufferings and their thirst. They cursed him, and hung the dead albatross round his neck as a punishment.

The next few days were terrible. The sailors' throats were so dry that they could not speak. Their eyes hurt with looking across the bright, glassy sea, watching all day long for a ship to come to help them.



Suddenly the old sailor saw a ship coming towards them.

“A sail! A sail!” he cried, and the others saw it, too, and cried aloud in joy. But the ship came slowly nearer, and the men were filled with fear. This was no ordinary ship: it was not real at all. It seemed like the shadow of a ship, and they could see the shape of the sun quite clearly through the sails. It came nearer and they saw that it had no crew. There were only two people on board: one was a woman with bright red lips and a dead white skin, and her companion was Death himself. They had come to take away the suffering sailors, to carry their souls to the land of Death. The old sailor watched, and saw his companions fall down dead, one after another, and the terrible Ship of Death sailed away again with their souls.

He was the only man alive.

“Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!”

For seven days he tried to pray, but he could not break the sailors' curse. He could not sleep, and all day and all night he had to look upon the bodies of his dead companions lying round him.

But at last God took pity on him. One day the sailor was watching the watersnakes swimming round the ship. Their colours were so beautiful and he was filled with such a strange wonder that he felt a great love for them and blessed them from

his heart. At once the albatross fell from his neck into the sea, and the old man fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up it was raining. His thirsty lips were wet and his throat felt fresh and cold again. He thought he heard music all around him, and two voices in the air. One voice said: "Is this the man who killed the harmless albatross?"

And the other voice answered: "He has been punished enough."

A soft wind came, and blew the ship gently back to harbour. The old man was weak and ill after all his sufferings, and he was nearly dead by the time he got back home.

"And that is all," the old sailor finished his story. "I was saved because I had shown a true love for all living things, even for watersnakes. Sometimes I feel I must tell my terrible story again and teach others the importance of the lesson I learned.

He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.

I find peace and happiness again as soon as I have told my story and taught people that they must love all things on earth."

And the old sailor, with his strange bright eyes and long grey beard, went away, leaving the marriage guest alone.

QUESTIONS

1. To whom did the old sailor tell his story?
2. Why did his companions curse him?
3. After the sailor had killed the albatross, what kind of weather did they have?
4. Why did the strange shadow ship come to meet them?
5. What did the old sailor do to win God's forgiveness?

THE JACKDAW OF RHEIMS

By Thomas Ingoldsby

(R. H. BARHAM)

[Thomas Ingoldsby (1788-1845) is the pen-name of R. H. Barham who is well known for his collected tales in verse under the title, *Ingoldsby Legends*. You will be reading one of his legends in the following story.]

THE Lord Cardinal of Rheims was having a feast, and he had invited many priests and other important men. The Cardinal's little jackdaw hopped in and out among the people at the feast. He stole the food from their plates, and walked all over the table. Then he sat on the arm of the Cardinal's chair, and looked up into his face and seemed to say: "You and I are the most important people here today!"

After the meal was over, six little singing-boys came into the room. They had nice clean faces and nice white clothes, and they came to wait on the Cardinal. One little boy carried a gold basin filled with water, for the Cardinal to wash his hands; and the others brought soap and a clean white towel. The Lord Cardinal turned round and saw the little boys, and took the beautiful gold

cardinal : an important priest.

jackdaw : a black bird.

ring off his finger. He did not want to wet it when he washed his hands, and he put it down beside his plate.

He did not think about his little jackdaw. He forgot that all jackdaws are thieves, and like to steal bright things. Nobody was watching the bright-eyed little bird. Nobody saw him pick up the Cardinal's ring and fly away with it. But there was trouble when the Cardinal finished washing his hands and looked for his ring.

"Where is my ring?" he said angrily. "Who has taken my gold ring?"

He made all the guests turn out their pockets, but nobody had the ring. The priests looked everywhere. They looked on the floor and under the table; they looked in the dishes and under the plates; they turned up the floor rugs and they looked in the fire. The Cardinal took off his shoes to see if the ring had fallen into them. But no! No such thing! They could not find the ring.

"Somebody has stolen it," said the Cardinal. He was very angry. "I shall curse the thief!" he said.

The Cardinal's curse always brought very bad luck, because he was a holy man. Everyone feared the Cardinal's curse! And now he cursed the thief.

"I hope he will be taken ill," he said. "I hope he will lose all his hair, and that he will grow thin and weak. I hope he will not be able to sleep at

night, and not be able to eat during the day. And I hope he will die if he does not return my ring to me."

Nobody had ever heard such a terrible curse! The guests looked at each other in fear, feeling sure that they would soon see who had stolen the ring. But to their surprise, nobody changed at all. They all looked just the same. The terrible curse seemed to have had no effect.

The priests looked for the ring all through the night, and in the morning they suddenly saw the jackdaw come into the room. But how he had changed! He wasn't gay as he had been the previous day. His feathers were all turned the wrong



way, and he could hardly walk. He was almost blind and he had not a single feather on his head.

The priests knew what had happened at once. The jackdaw was suffering from the Cardinal's curse! They cried: "There's the one who has done this thing! There's the thief who has got my Lord Cardinal's ring!"

The poor little jackdaw gave a weak little 'Caw'. He was trying to say 'Please come this way!' They followed him slowly, and at last they came to the jackdaw's nest. They looked inside and saw the Cardinal's ring, lying in the middle of the sticks and straw.

Then the great Lord Cardinal took away the terrible curse, and the poor little bird was changed in a minute. He grew a new lot of feathers, as thick as a mat; he waved his tail happily, and grew smooth and fat.

But he had learned his lesson. He never stole again, and he was always so good that the priests all said: "We have never known such a holy jackdaw."

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Cardinal take off his ring?
2. Who stole the ring?
3. Why did the priests guess the next morning that the jackdaw was the thief?
4. Where did they find the ring?
5. Why did the jackdaw grow a new lot of feathers?

HORATIUS

By Lord Macaulay

[Lord Macaulay (1800–1859) was a historian, essayist and statesman. He is probably most widely known for his “*Essays*” and “*The History of England*”. This story comes from his collection of poems *The Lays of Ancient Rome*.]

MANY hundreds of years ago, a king of Tuscany, called Lars Porsena, decided to march against the Romans and seize the famous town of Rome. He sent messengers throughout his country, calling his soldiers to join him, and when his army was gathered together he set out for Rome.

The Romans began to make great preparations when they heard that this great army was coming to fight them. They brought all the people from the neighbouring villages into Rome. The river Tiber flowed round the town, and the people were safer there than in their own little villages. The great army of Lars Porsena marched nearer and nearer, setting fire to the villages and burning all the wheat-fields on their way.

At last the Romans decided to cut down the wooden bridge over the river Tiber. It was the only way to stop Lars Porsena from marching into Rome.

“Nothing else can save the town,” the people cried. But they were too late! A messenger came

running, in haste and fear, to say: "Lars Porsena is here!" And the people, standing on the walls surrounding the town, saw the great army coming from the west. Their weapons shone brightly in the sunlight, and their marching feet kicked up a great cloud of dust.

The Romans cried: "They will be here before we can break down the bridge. And if they cross the bridge, how can we save the town?"

Then brave Horatius spoke.

"Every man must die some time. I shall be proud to die today if I can save you from the Tuscans. Cut down the bridge as quickly as you can. I, with two more men to help me, will guard the bridge. In that narrow path, three of us can stop a thousand men. Now, who will stand on either hand and guard the bridge with me?"

Two of his friends, Lartius and Herminius, said they would go with him, and the fearless three walked across the bridge to meet the great Tuscan army. As soon as they had crossed over, the Romans began to cut down the bridge. On the other side, the three young men stood quietly waiting for the enemy.

The Tuscans laughed aloud when they saw only three young soldiers guarding the bridge, and three of their bravest men waved their swords and came forward to fight them. But Horatius, Lartius and Herminius killed them and threw their bodies into



the Tiber. The same thing happened to the next three Tuscan soldiers who came forward to fight them. And now the Tuscans did not laugh. They talked angrily among themselves, and called for the great Lord Astur, who was the bravest and most famous fighter in their army.

Astur came forward smiling, and said to the Tuscans: "Will you dare to follow, if Astur leads the way?"

Then, waving his great sword above his head, he rushed at Horatius and hit him with all his strength. The sword missed Horatius's head but hit his leg, and the Tuscans gave a joyful cry to see the red blood flow from the wound. Herminius came to

help his friend, and Horatius rested for a minute. Then, like an angry wild cat, he jumped right at Astur's face and gave him a terrible cut with his sword. The great Lord Astur fell dead, and Horatius stood over him and called out: "See how we welcome you here! Which noble Tuscan will come next to fight us?"

The Tuscans spoke together in anger and shame and fear, and even the bravest of them was afraid to come forward to fight the three fearless Romans on the bridge. There was one man in the Tuscan army called Sextus, who was really a Roman. He had run away from his own army and joined the Tuscans. Horatius saw him and called out:

"Now, welcome, welcome, Sextus!

Welcome to your home!

Why do you stay, and turn away?

Here lies the road to Rome!"

Sextus was very angry, but he was not brave enough to come and fight Horatius.

The Romans had been breaking down the bridge all this time, and now they saw that it was going to fall.

"Come back, come back, Horatius!" they cried. "Back, Lartius, back, Herminius! Come quickly, before the bridge falls."

Lartius and Herminius ran back across the bridge,

and as they passed over it they felt it cracking under their feet. They got safely over, but they turned and saw that Horatius stood alone on the other side and they wanted to run over again and join him. But, with a noise like thunder, the bridge suddenly crashed into the river, and a great cheer rose from the throats of the Romans. The bridge was broken, and the Tuscan army could not cross the river to Rome!

Brave Horatius stood alone. The Tuscans were in front of him, and the deep, wide Tiber was behind. Sextus, that false Roman who had joined the Tuscans, cried out: "Kill him! Kill him!"

And the great Lars Porsena called to Horatius to surrender.

But Horatius did not even speak to them. With a prayer to the river Tiber to carry him safely across to Rome, he jumped into the strongly flowing water.

No one spoke a word. They stood silently and watched the river. At last they saw Horatius's head appear above the waves, and the Romans cried out in wonder. Even the Tuscan army gave a cheer, and the great Lars Porsena said: "God help him and bring him safely home. I have never seen such a fearless young man."

False Sextus was the only one who wanted Horatius to drown.

They all watched breathlessly. The river was

deep and flowed very fast, and it did not seem possible that Horatius could swim across. He had been badly wounded and he was weak from loss of blood. But at last he stood on dry ground, and the Romans carried him joyfully through the River Gate to the town.

This happened many hundred years ago, but the people of Rome still tell the wonderful story of how well Horatius kept the bridge in the brave days of old.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Romans decide to cut down the bridge across the river Tiber?
2. Why did Horatius say he would guard the bridge?
3. How many friends did he take with him?
4. What did Horatius do when the bridge fell into the river?
5. Did anyone want Horatius to drown?

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THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

By Robert Browning

[Robert Browning, lived in England in the 19th century. His long poem *The Ring and the Book* is recognised as his greatest achievement. Some of his popular poems are *How They Brought Home the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, *The Last Ride Together* and *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* whose story is given below.]

HAMELIN is a town in Germany, and the river Weser runs on the south side of the town. It is a beautiful place, but at the time of this story (nearly five hundred years ago) the people of Hamelin were very unhappy. The town was full of rats! And they were such terrible rats. They fought the dogs and killed the cats; they bit the sleeping babies and stole all the food. They made their nests in people's hats, and made such a noise all the time.

At last the people went to speak to the Mayor.

"You must think of a plan to kill these rats," they said angrily. "If you don't, we will send you away and choose a new Mayor."

The poor fat old Mayor did not know what to do.

"It's easy enough to tell me to think of a plan," he said. "I've thought and thought until my head

*pie*d: two-coloured. He was dressed in yellow and red.

Mayor: the head of the governing-body of a city.

aches. But what can we do? There are so many rats—we cannot kill them all.”

While he was talking, he heard a knock on the door and he called: “Come in!”

The strangest person came into the room. He was dressed in a long coat which was half yellow and half red; and he himself was tall and thin, with bright blue eyes and a sunburnt skin. Nobody knew who he was, because nobody had ever seen him before.

The strange man walked up to the Mayor and said: “I can play music to take away any harmful creatures which hurt and trouble you. People call me the Pied Piper.”

And the Mayor saw that he was carrying a pipe which he was always touching with his fingers.

“Yes,” the stranger went on. “I am only a poor piper. Will you give me a thousand guilders if I take the rats away from Hamelin?” (The guilder was old German money. It was worth about one rupee.)

“A thousand guilders? I’ll give you fifty thousand!” cried the surprised Mayor.

The Piper stepped into the street, smiling a little smile. He knew the wonder which was hidden in his pipe, and he began to play a strange little tune. At once there was a noise like a marching army, and the rats came running out of all the houses.

ache: pain.

Big rats, small rats, thin rats, fat rats; brown rats,
white rats, grey rats, black rats.

‘Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Families by tens and dozens;
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives,
Followed the Piper for their lives.’

He walked through the town, playing on his pipe,
and the rats followed him until they came to the
river Weser. Here the Piper stopped. But the
rats ran on into the river, and every one was
drowned.

The people of Hamelin were overjoyed. The



Mayor told them to get long sticks and dig out the rats' nests. They were all busy working when the Piper appeared in the market-place and said: "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

"A thousand guilders!" The Mayor looked doubtful. A thousand guilders was a lot of money to pay this unknown piper in his strange, gay coat of red and yellow!

"Besides," said the Mayor with a laugh, "our business ended on the river bank. We saw the rats drown; and what is dead cannot come to life again. We were not serious when we spoke of a thousand guilders. Come, my friend, take fifty!"

The Piper was very angry. The Mayor had promised to give him a thousand guilders.

"If you don't pay me my money soon," he said, "you'll hear me pipe to another tune."

"All right, go on, and do your worst!" said the Mayor, with a loud laugh. "Blow your pipe until you burst!"

But he soon stopped laughing.

The Piper stepped into the street again and put his pipe to his mouth. He began to play a soft sweet tune. At once there was the sound of running feet, and all the children came out of the houses. All the little boys and girls ran happily after the wonderful music, with talking and laughter.

The Mayor and the people could not move a step to stop the children, who ran in a joyous crowd

after the Pied Piper. They thought he was taking the children to the river, but he turned towards a high hill in the west and the people were glad.

“He’ll never get over that mountain top!” they cried. “He’ll have to let his piping drop, and we shall see our children stop.”

But the Piper did not need to stop when he came to the mountain. A wonderful door opened in the side of the hill. The Piper walked through the door and the children followed him, and, when they were all inside, the door in the mountain shut once more.

Only one child returned to Hamelin. A little lame boy followed the other children, but he could not run as fast as they could. When he came to the mountain, the door was shut again, and he was left outside.

He returned sadly to Hamelin, and when people spoke of his sadness he said: “I am all alone now that my friends have gone away. The Piper promised us such a happy life, where everything would be strange and new. He said my lame foot would be quickly cured. But I could not run fast enough. The music stopped, and I found myself outside the hill—left alone against my will.”

The Mayor sent men north, south, east and

lame: with one leg shorter than the other.

west to look for the Piper, and to offer him as much money as he wanted if he would bring the children back to Hamelin.

But the Pied Piper and the children had gone for ever, and they were never seen again.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the people of Hamelin go to speak to the Mayor?
2. How was the Pied Piper dressed?
3. Where did the Piper take the rats?
4. Why did he take the children away from Hamelin?
5. Where did he take the children, and who was left behind?

THE LADY OF SHALOTT AND THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

By Lord Tennyson

[Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate of England in 1850. His poetry is beautifully expressed and easy to understand.]

Many hundreds of years ago, there lived in England a king called Arthur. He was very famous and very brave, and many stories were told about his adventures. Some of the stories were true, but many were made up by the people to show what a wonderful king he was. Tennyson wrote a number of poems about Arthur and his Knights, and here are two of the stories from his poems.]

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

NEAR the town of Camelot, where King Arthur lived, there was an island called the Island of Shalott. Nobody lived on this island except a beautiful lady, who lived alone in a castle which had grey walls and four grey towers. Nobody had ever seen the Lady of Shalott, but farmers, working in their fields, sometimes heard her singing, and they said to each other: "It is the Lady of Shalott."

No one knew who she was, but people had heard that there was a curse upon her. She was forbidden to look out of her window. She sat all day long at her spinning-wheel, singing softly. She sat with her back to the window, looking into a mirror which reflected the outside world. In her mirror she could see the winding road to Camelot, and she watched the people passing by. Sometimes she saw the country girls going to market; or a priest riding by on his donkey. Sometimes she saw the lords and ladies of King Arthur's Court, riding on their fine horses. She would weave these pictures into the cloth she was making. She knew she would never see real people, so she watched the shadows reflected in her mirror.

One day Sir Lancelot came riding past her window. He was a knight of King Arthur's Court at Camelot, and he was a very handsome young man. The Lady of Shalott saw his reflection in her mirror, and she loved him at once. She left her spinning-wheel and turned round to the window—forgetting everything except her wish to see the young man himself, and not just his pale reflection. She looked at him through the window, and suddenly the cloth which she was making was torn across, and the mirror cracked from side to side.

"The curse is come upon me!" cried the Lady of Shalott.

She knew that she must die. It was her punish-



ment for looking through the window. She went down to the river and found a boat tied under the trees on the river bank. She wrote the words *The Lady of Shalott* round the outside of the boat, and, when evening came, she got into the boat and untied it from the tree. She lay there quietly, dressed all in white, and the river carried the boat down to Camelot. The farmers, working in their fields, heard her singing her last song, and—before she came to Camelot—she was dead.

The people of Camelot saw the little boat pass slowly by, and they were filled with fear at the

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strange sight. Sir Lancelot saw it, too, and looked gently at the quiet face.

‘ He said: “ She has a lovely face!

God in his mercy lend her grace,

The Lady of Shalott.” ’107723

THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

KING Arthur and his faithful knights had been fighting all day, but now they were beaten by their enemies. Man after man had fallen in the fight, and King Arthur himself had been badly wounded. Sir Bedivere was the only one left unhurt, and he carried his king to a little temple in a field, near a great lake.

King Arthur said quietly: “ The men I loved all sleep the deep sleep of death. We shall never again walk together through the gardens of Camelot. And I am dying, Bedivere. I shall not live till morning. Will you do one last thing for me?”

Bedivere was filled with sorrow, and he promised the king to do anything he wanted.

“ I want you to take my sword, Excalibur,” said Arthur. “ Do you remember the strange way in which I got the sword? We saw an arm—clothed all in white, strange and wonderful—rise out of the lake. It was holding the sword, and I went across the lake and took it. I have used the sword always, but now that I am dying I want you to take it

and throw it back into the lake. Watch carefully, and come back and tell me what you see."

Sir Bedivere did not want to leave the wounded king alone.

"A little thing can harm a wounded man," he said. "But I will do what you ask, and come back as quickly as I can."

He took the sword and climbed down the rough path to the lake. But when he got there he could not make up his mind to throw the sword into the water. It was such a beautiful weapon. So he hid it in the bushes by the lake and walked back slowly to the wounded king.

King Arthur asked him at once: "Have you done what I told you to do? What did you see? What did you hear?"

Sir Bedivere answered: "I heard the water washing against the rocks."

King Arthur, faint and pale, cried out that Bedivere was telling him a shameful lie.

"There will be some sure sign when you throw Excalibur into the lake," he said. "Now, go again—and do what I told you to do. Watch carefully, and tell me what you see."

Bedivere went down to the lake a second time. He looked at the sword and thought: "The king is sick, and does not know what he is doing. It would be a terrible thing for this famous sword to be lost. It should be kept carefully for future peo-

ple to look at and remember Arthur's greatness." So he hid Excalibur a second time, and went back slowly to the wounded king.

King Arthur asked him what he had seen and heard, and Bedivere replied again: "I heard the water washing against the rocks."

King Arthur's anger was very great.

"Miserable, unkind, untrue!" he cried. "I am dying, but you will not obey me. I give you one more chance to show your love. Go—throw the sword into the lake! But if you do not obey me this time, I will rise and kill you with my own hands."



Sir Bedivere ran quickly to the lake and took the sword out of the bushes. He waved it high above his head and threw it far out into the lake. And an arm—clothed all in white, strange and wonderful—rose out of the lake and caught the sword. It waved it three times in the air, and then pulled it down into the water.

Sir Bedivere returned quickly to the king, and Arthur saw from his face that he had at last obeyed him.

“What did you see? What did you hear?” he asked again.

And brave Sir Bedivere answered: “Sir King, I saw an arm—clothed all in white, most strange and wonderful—which caught the sword, waved it three times, and pulled it down into the water.”

King Arthur was very weak now, and he knew he would die very soon.

“It is time for me to go,” he said, sitting up in great pain and looking towards the lake with wide blue eyes.

Sir Bedivere gently lifted his king, and carried him on his shoulders to the lake. The path was rough and he sometimes slipped on the stones, but he walked as fast as he could, because the king kept saying: “Quick, quick! I fear it is too late and I shall die.”

At last they came to the lake, shining silver in the moonlight, and they saw a boat on the water.

Three beautiful queens were standing in the boat, dressed in black from head to foot. They saw Bedivere with the wounded king, and they gave a great cry of sorrow.

Arthur said to Bedivere: "Put me in the boat." And the three queens held out their hands and took the king. The tallest of the three laid his head on her knees, and held his hands and called him by his name. His face was white and marked with blood from his wounds, and he lay there, half-fainting.

Sir Bedivere cried: "Ah, my Lord Arthur, where shall I go? Where can I live? Now the true old times are dead, and I—the last of your followers—am left without companions. I cannot face the dark years of the future, if I have to live among new men and strange faces."

And Arthur answered slowly from the boat: "Life is always changing, Bedivere. God arranges it so. I have lived my life and I am going to die, but you have your life before you. Go your way, and pray for my soul. There is great strength in prayer. And now, goodbye. I am going a long way, to the island-valley of Avilion. It does not rain there, and no cold winds blow. I shall find peace and quiet in that sunny place, and my terrible wound will heal."

He smiled kindly at the unhappy Bedivere, and the boat sailed slowly away. Bedivere stood beside

the lake, remembering his life with Arthur, and watched the boat until it disappeared from sight.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Lady of Shalott look into her mirror all day long?
2. Why did the mirror crack from side to side?
3. What did King Arthur tell Sir Bedivere to do with the sword Excalibur?
4. When Sir Bedivere said: 'I heard the water washing against the rocks,' how did King Arthur know he had not thrown the sword into the lake?
5. What did Sir Bedivere see when he did throw the sword into the lake?
6. Who were waiting in the boat to take King Arthur to Avilion, the peaceful island-valley of the dead?

THE SONG OF HIAWATHA

By H. W. Longfellow

[Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882) was born at Portland, Maine, U.S.A. His poetry appeals to most readers, with its warmth of feeling and true description of nature. His *Psalm of Life* and *Excelsior* are very popular.

Hiawatha was a Red Indian who lived in America many years ago. He was as famous in America as King Arthur was in England, and many stories were told about him. Some of his adventures were true, but some were made up by the Red Indians, just as some of the stories about King Arthur were not really true. Both the English King and the Red Indian Chief were so famous that their people often told strange stories about them to show how wonderful they were.

Hiawatha was a real man, and a brave and clever man, too, but all the stories cannot really have been true because they give him magic powers and make him seem more like a god than a man. For example, the stories say that Hiawatha could understand animals and talk to them in their own language; and he had some wonderful mittens which he put on his hands to give him great strength. When he was wearing his mittens, he could tear great rocks in half and pull trees up by their roots. In many of the stories, Hiawatha is helped by animals, but some of the creatures in Nature are his enemies. You will find that he fights the West Wind, Mudjekeewis; and he has another fight with the King of Fishes, Nahma. Here are some of the stories from the long poem, '*The Song of Hiawatha*,' by the American poet.]

1. HIAWATHA AND MUDJEKEEWIS

People believed that the West Wind, Mudjekeewis, was Hiawatha's father. He was cruel and wicked and he left Hiawatha's mother to die when the baby was born. Hiawatha's grandmother, Nokomis, took care of the baby boy. She taught him many things about Nature, and he grew to love all country things—the trees and singing birds, the wild flowers of the forest, and the moon and stars. He listened to the birds and learned their language. He learned how they built their nests in summer, and where they hid themselves in winter; he talked to them and called them 'Hiawatha's chickens'.

He learned other things, too. Old Iagoo, the village story-teller, made a bow and feathered arrows for the little boy, and taught him how to use them. Hiawatha learned how to run as fast as a deer, and to swim like a fish. And his grandmother, old Nokomis, made him some wonderful magic mittens¹ out of deerskin.

Hiawatha grew from a child to a man, and was brave and wise and clever. He had often asked Nokomis about his father, Mudjekeewis, and she told him about the West Wind's cruelty to his mother. Hiawatha grew angry and he said to old Nokomis: "I will go to Mudjekeewis, to the doorway of the West Wind."

He took his bow and arrows and his wonderful

¹ *mittens*: coverings for the hands.

mittens, and set out for the West Wind's home. Nokomis begged him not to go. Mudjekeewis was strong and wicked, she said. He might harm the young Hiawatha. But the fearless Hiawatha did not listen to her warning, and he set off on his journey to the West.

At last he came to the Rocky Mountains, to the kingdom of the West Wind, and met his father. Mudjekeewis was filled with joy when he saw his son, and welcomed him to his home. They talked together for many days, and Hiawatha listened patiently while the West Wind boasted of his strength and courage. But the young man's heart was angry, and at last he said:

"O, Mudjekeewis, is there nothing that can harm you? Nothing that you are afraid of?"

And his father answered: "I am afraid of nothing except that great rock over there." He smiled at his son and added: "And you, my Hiawatha! Is there anything that can harm you? Anything you are afraid of?"

But Hiawatha was clever. He was not going to tell the West Wind what he really feared, so he said in fun: "I am only afraid of that bush growing by the river."

And he pretended to cry out in fear when Mudjekeewis stretched out his hand to take the bush.

"No, indeed, I will not touch it!" said Mudjekeewis, and they talked again of other things. Soon

the West Wind began to tell Hiawatha about his beautiful mother, Wenonah, and Hiawatha could not control his anger. He cried: "It was you who killed Wenonah, and took her young life and her beauty!"

He jumped up and took the great black rock in his hands. With his magic mittens he tore the rock in two pieces and threw them at his father. But the West Wind had spoken in fun, too. He was not really afraid of the rock, and he blew the pieces away from him like feathers in the wind. He took a branch of the bush growing by the river, and waved it at Hiawatha, but the young man only laughed at him.

Then they had a terrible fight. The great rocks crashed down the hillsides, and the whole earth shook with the noise. Mudjekeewis ran back through the mountains with Hiawatha following him, fighting all the way. They fought for three whole days until they reached the doorway of the West Wind. Here Mudjekeewis stopped and cried: "Stop, my son, my Hiawatha! It is not possible to kill me. I have tested you and you have proved how strong and brave you are. Go back to your home and people; live and work among them. And when you die, I will share my kingdom with you."

So Hiawatha went home again. He had fought well and bravely, and his anger against his father was gone.

On his way home he stopped in the land of the Dacotahs, to have his arrows sharpened by an old arrow-maker. The old man had a beautiful daughter called Minnehaha, which, in Red Indian language, means Laughing Water. Hiawatha did not stay long with the arrow-maker, but when he arrived home he often thought about the dark-eyed Laughing Water, and he could not forget her beauty and her gentleness.

2. HIAWATHA'S FRIENDS

Hiawatha had two friends whom he loved more than all the others. One friend was Chibiabos, the musician.

Chibiabos was the sweetest of all singers, and when he sang the whole village listened. All the brave men crowded round him and the women came to hear him. But the gods were jealous of Hiawatha's love for Chibiabos, and they made a plan to kill the young musician. Hiawatha feared the anger of the gods, and begged his friend to be careful, but Chibiabos laughed and answered:

“Do not fear for me, O Brother!

Harm and evil will not touch me!”

But one day in winter time, when all the earth was frozen, Chibiabos went out alone to hunt the deer. The great lake, which the Red Indians called Big-Sea-Water, was frozen hard, and the deer ran across the ice. Chibiabos followed, but the evil

gods were waiting for him. They broke the ice and pulled Chibiabos down into the water and he was drowned.

Hiawatha's sorrow was very great. He sat in his home for seven weeks, crying for his friend.

“He is dead, the sweet musician!

He has gone from us for ever.

O, my Brother, Chibiabos!”

But when spring came, and the snow and ice melted from the lakes and mountains, the medicine-men* and doctors visited Hiawatha and he was cured of his sorrow. He went out and found the body of Chibiabos, and brought it home for burial.

Hiawatha's other friend was Kwasind, a very strong man. He was a good man and everybody loved him. As a child he had been slow and quiet, and his parents thought he was lazy.

“Lazy Kwasind!” said his mother. “You never help me in my work. In summer you play all day in the fields, and in winter you sit beside the fire. In the coldest winter days I must break the ice for fishing, and you never help me with my nets. See—they are hanging at the door now, full of water. Take them out and dry them for me.”

And Kwasind, who was not really lazy, went out and dried the nets; but his hands were so strong that he broke the thin nets with his fingers.

“Lazy Kwasind!” said his father. “You never

**medicine-man*: a magician with powers of curing disease.

help me with my hunting. You break every bow you touch. But come with me into the forest. You can at least help me to carry home the deer I kill."

So Kwasind went hunting with his father. They walked down a narrow path, but after a time they came to a place where the path was filled with fallen trees.

"We must go back," said Kwasind's father. "We cannot climb over all these trees. A rat could not find a way through."

But Kwasind seized the trees in his strong hands and threw them off the path, clearing a way for them to go.

"Lazy Kwasind!" said the young men, playing at fighting in the fields. "Why don't you join us in our games?"

Kwasind made no answer. He rose slowly, seized a great rock in his fingers and threw it far into the river.

This strong young man was Hiawatha's friend, and they spent many happy hours together—hunting, fishing, playing, fighting. But the angry Little People, the wicked little forest gods, were jealous of Kwasind because he was so strong, and they made a plan to kill him. The Little People knew that nothing could kill Kwasind except the seed of the fir-tree, and they knew they must wound him in his head. So they picked seeds from the fir-tree and took them down to the river bank. They knew

that Kwasind was sailing down the river that day, and waited for him, hiding in the red rocks by the river.

Soon he sailed past their hiding-place and they threw the fir seeds at him, crying: "Death to Kwasind!"

Kwasind fell into the water and was never seen again. But the people still remember him. When the nights are stormy and the wind blows through the forest, the people listen to the crashing of the branches and say: "That is Kwasind. He is gathering in his firewood."

3. HIAWATHA'S FISHING

Hiawatha built himself a light boat which moved quickly in the water, and he took his fishing line and sailed on the shining Big-Sea-Water. He wanted to catch the great fish, Nahma, the King of Fishes.

He could see the fishes swimming in the cold, clear water. He saw the pike-fish and the sun-fish, but he could not find the Nahma. Then suddenly he saw it, lying on the white sand at the bottom of the lake.

Hiawatha threw out his line and called out: "Come and take my line, O Nahma! Come up from below the water. Let us see who is the stronger!"

But the Nahma lay quiet on the white sand. It

said to the pike-fish: "Take Hiawatha's line and break it!"

Hiawatha felt the line grow tight and he pulled it quickly in. But when he saw he had only caught the pike-fish, he threw it back into the water, saying:

"You are not the fish I wanted.

You are not the King of Fishes!"

Then Nahma told the sun-fish to break Hiawatha's line, and the big sun-fish seized the line and swung it round and round in the water. But Hiawatha caught it, too, and threw it back into the water, saying:

"You are not the fish I wanted.

You are not the King of Fishes!"

He shouted again for Nahma, and the great fish grew angry. It rose up from the sandy bottom and, in a flash, it opened its mouth and ate Hiawatha and his boat.

Hiawatha, down in the dark cave inside the fish, hit and cut it with his knife, struggling to kill the great Nahma. At last the fish turned over in the water and died, and the waves of the lake washed it slowly towards the land.

Hiawatha heard the sound of birds fighting over the fish's body, and he called out to them: "O, you seabirds, O, my brothers! I have killed the great fish Nahma. Bite him and make a hole in his side. Set me free from this dark place."

The seabirds looked at him with their bright eyes and cried: "It is our brother, Hiawatha!" They made the openings wider in the fish's side and Hiawatha climbed safely out. He called to old Nokomis and pointed to the great fish Nahma lying lifeless on the ground with the seabirds eating it.

"I have killed the King of Fishes!" he told her; and his old grandmother was very proud of Hiawatha.

4. HIAWATHA'S MARRIAGE

Hiawatha had never forgotten the beautiful Minnehaha, daughter of the old arrow-maker in the land of the Dacotahs; but old Nokomis did not want him to go so far away to find a wife.

"Marry a woman of your own people," she said. "The Dacotahs are a wild people. There is often war between us. You do not want to marry someone whose people may become our enemies."

"If I marry Minnehaha, our people and her people will join together in friendship," Hiawatha said. "There will be no more war between us."

And so he went to the land of the Dacotahs. On the way, he shot a deer with his bow and arrows, and carried it across his shoulders to give to Minnehaha.

The old arrow-maker and his daughter sat at the doorway of their home. The old man was thinking of the days of his youth, when he had been a strong



and fearless hunter; but Minnehaha was thinking of the young man who had once come to her father's house to have his arrows sharpened. She did not even know his name, but he had been tall and straight and handsome. Suddenly she heard a footstep and she looked up to see Hiawatha standing there. It was the same young man whom she had been thinking about!

Hiawatha laid the red deer at her feet, and she smiled at him and said: "You are welcome!"

They all went into the house, and Minnehaha brought a meal and set it before them. Hiawatha

told her and her father about his life; he told them about Nokomis, and his friends Chibiabos and Kwasind; and about the happiness and plenty in his own district. He said that there was peace between his people and the Dacotahs, and added, speaking to the arrow-maker: "Let this peace last for ever, and our hands be joined more closely. Give me your daughter for my wife."

The old man looked at Laughing Water and answered: "Yes, if Minnehaha wishes. What is your answer, Minnehaha?"

The beautiful Minnehaha went to Hiawatha. She sat down quietly beside him and said: "I will follow you, my husband."

The next day they set off together for Hiawatha's home. They left the old man alone. He thought sadly to himself: "This is what always happens. Our daughters leave us just when they have learnt to help us. When we are old and need their help a stranger comes through the village. He smiles at a beautiful girl and she follows him—leaving her home to go with a stranger."

But the old man knew that Laughing Water would be happy with her stranger. Hiawatha loved her dearly, and she loved him. They were welcomed home by Nokomis, who made a great marriage feast for them. All the people of the village came to the feast, and there was singing and dancing; and old Iagoo, the story-teller, told

many stories. At last the feast was over and the guests went home, leaving the happy Hiawatha and Minnehaha together.

5. THE FAMINE

Hiawatha and Laughing Water lived happily together for many years, but one cold winter there was a terrible famine in the land. There was ice and snow everywhere; the lakes and rivers were frozen, and all the plants and animals died. All the earth was sick and hungry. The people had no food; the women and the children fell sick with fever, and many of them died.

One day Hiawatha came home from hunting and found Minnehaha lying weak and ill on her bed. She had caught the fever, too. Hiawatha rushed out into the forest again, searching everywhere for something for her to eat. He cried to the great God of Life: "Give your children food, O father! Give us food or we shall die. Give me food for Minnehaha—for my dying Minnehaha!"

But no one answered his prayer, and when he got back home again he found his wife was dead.

He sat beside her for seven long days and nights, speaking to no one in his sorrow, but thinking of his life with Minnehaha. He remembered their many happy days together, and he thought of that

famine: a time of great food shortage.

never-forgotten summer when he brought his young wife home from the land of the Dacotahs.

On the seventh day he buried her. His heart was at peace now: he had found comfort in his thoughts. He said goodbye to his loved one:

“Farewell, O my Laughing Water!
All my heart is buried with you,
All my thoughts go onward with you.
Soon my work will be completed,
Soon your footsteps I will follow
To the Islands of the Blessed,
To the Land of the Hereafter.”

And when his work on earth was done, Hiawatha followed her. He said goodbye to old Nokomis, saying: “O Nokomis, I am going on a long and distant journey, to the Kingdom of the West Wind, to my father, Mudjekeewis.”

He went down to the lake and pushed his boat into the water. He turned and waved his hand to old Nokomis before he sailed away to the West. All his people watched him going, and they said: “Goodbye, for ever!” The dark and quiet forests cried: “Goodbye, O Hiawatha!”

And Hiawatha sailed towards the evening sunshine, to the Islands of the Blessed, to the Land of the Hereafter.

QUESTIONS

1. Who was Hiawatha's father, and why did his old grandmother look after the little boy?
2. Why could Hiawatha break great rocks in his hands when he was fighting Mudjekeewis?
3. Whom did Hiawatha see in the land of the Dacotahs, as he was returning from the Kingdom of the West Wind?
4. Who was Chibiabos?
5. How did the Little People kill Kwasind?
6. Who helped Hiawatha to get out from inside the great fish, Nahma?
7. Why didn't Nokomis want Hiawatha to go to the land of the Dacotahs in search of a wife? And what answer did Hiawatha give her?
8. Why did Minnehaha die?



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